the towns is scarcely above subsistence-level. In most parts of the country the huts of the peasants, made of wattle or mud-brick or in parts of stone, contain nothing but the barest necessities; and the greater part of the population live on a diet of bread, olive-oil, milk and perhaps fruit and vegetables in season. Famine is rare, and has not occurred on a large scale since the First World War; but malnutrition is very widespread. On account of this and of the absence of sanitation and the scarcity of doctors in the country districts, the standard of health is also low. Malaria, typhoid, trachoma and other diseases are endemic. The standard of living is highest in Beirut and the Christian parts of Lebanon, which have profited greatly from the savings and experience of the emigrants to the New World.

6

The changes in the economic system are beginning to cause far-reaching changes in the whole social structure. In the larger towns the externals of life are almost wholly modernized. Clothes and foodstuffs, the construction and furnishing of houses and methods of transport all approximate to those in use in Europe. The old externals it is true still linger on; the camel and the motor-car jostle one another in the streets of Damascus. But it is generally recognized, and on the whole without regret, that it is only a matter of time until the old completely disappears. In the small towns and villages of the Christian portions of Lebanon, too, the process of Westernization in externals has gone far. In the smaller towns and countryside of the interior, the change is slower in coming; but motor-cars and roads have prepared the way for it.

The fundamental social forms, however, are slower in changing. The dominant social class is still that of the landowners, who continue to possess a semi-feudal status. No other social class is strong or self-conscious enough to stand against them. The cultivators have little effective power of moving from one estate or region to another; although intelligent, they are too unenlightened to have much effective sense of grievance or capacity for political or economic combination. Only in parts of Lebanon does there exist a considerable number of free and comparatively enlightened smallholders. As yet there is neither an industrial middle

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
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shown in the table above are found in other parts of the Middle East but three indigenous sects need mention here: the Druzes, who are a mountain people professing a religion which derived from Islam in the eleventh century A.D., but became independent; the Alawis of the mountains behind Latakia, whose religion appears to be a dogmatic form of Shii Islam with some survivals of Christian ritual; and the Maronites, who are a Christian sect, living mainly in the north of Lebanon.

The religion of the majority of Syrians and of the head of the Syrian state is Sunni Islam; in the Lebanon, Muslims and Christians are fairly evenly divided and the President of the Republic is a Maronite Christian and the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim. The Christians of the Arab Levant have provided the Middle East with great leaders in journalism, letters, politics, and science, but in present-day Syria the Christians are mainly prominent in commerce and industry. There is hardly any dangerous animosity between the sects, but sectarian bonds are a very real force in the lives of people who for so long lived under the Turkish *millet* system whereby each sect was an administrative unit, the head of which exercised considerable authority.

So mixed a population living in a variety of environments naturally does not constitute one physical type, but some generalizations are hazarded for the sake of a fuller picture. Dark hair is almost universal but the skin of the town dweller is no darker than that of a Mediterranean European; the Syrians and Lebanese are not often as tall or as heavy as the average Englishman but they mature at an earlier age. The poorer nomad eats mainly bread, with milk and fruit and vegetables as less frequent additions and meat as an event, but in the towns and villages most people eat a full diet with rather more oil and spice than is used in Britain. The cultivator and the nomad wear local costumes but most townspeople wear European clothes; the tarbush or the head-cloth are usual but not universal headgear for men. Most Muslim women wear the veil, but in the towns the richer women are becoming more and more emancipated and, particularly in Beirut, many lead the same lives as Christian women. In Lebanon and in Damascus and Aleppo the way of life is very like that in southern Europe, and both countries make a pleasant home for a European.

History

Semitic-speaking people have inhabited for four or five millennia the area which is known historically as Syria, and yet for much of this period the rulers of what is now Syria an

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their animals. Malaria is prevalent. The majority are heavily indebted. The tenants on the irrigated land, with an average holding of 18 acres, are also poor but less heavily indebted, because they can depend on a more regular income.

The poorest class are the landless labourers whose income in money and kind amounts to 530 Syrian pounds a year (1944) (£10 at 1939 prices).[1] This is a starvation wage, which means that they can only eat enough in harvest time, and in winter must subsist on maize, bread, and grass.

The poverty on this estate is therefore a result of the low productivity and the low proportion of the area under cultivation. One way of increasing the area cultivated would be by the use of machinery. Tractors were introduced some fifteen years ago, but proved too costly in relation to the low prices of Syrian grain; owing to lack of skilled drivers and proper maintenance they fell into disrepair. During the late war, however, as the price of grain rose, tractors were again used by some tenants who hired them from neighbouring estates.

Another way of raising production would be to increase irrigation since there is sufficient water to supply much more land. In this respect the estate is typical of the whole Homs–Hama plain, where much of the water which the French authorities have made available by irrigaton goes to waste.

On this estate, therefore, the poverty of the cultivators is due to the landowner's failure to increase the productivity of the soil, rather than to his exploitation of the peasants; compared with other estates, this one is socially progressive, since the landowner's family have set up a school and also distribute medicines free of charge.

The second study covers a more intensively cultivated village, Ashrafie on the borders of the irrigated district of Damascus. Less heavily supplied with water than El Ghuta itself, Ashrafie has sufficient water to irrigate 10 per cent of the total land. The total area is 1:600 hectares or 4,000 acres, of which 2,400 are owned by four estate owners and the rest by peasants. The largest landowner is an absentee, letting his land on a 50 per cent share-tenancy basis; with definite three-year leases (by contrast with the usual custom under which the tenant has no lease).

[1] This is calculated on a rate of 9 Syrian pounds to £1, allowing for a six-fold increase in the Syrian cost of living between 1939 and 1944.

1 [The estate of Misherfe, near Homs --Analyst]

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LAND TENURE

Of the total 160 families in the village, 100 own some land and 60 own no land. The peasant owners are divided as follows

1. Rich farmers, owning about 10 hectares ..	5 families
2. Medium farmers, owning from 3 to 8 hectares	80 „
3. Poor farmers, owning between 1 and 3 hectares	15 „
4. Share-tenants	10 „
5. Labourers	50 „

As in Misherfe, two-thirds of the land is uncropped each year. The peasant divides the land into three plots, one sown with a crop, one ploughed but not sown, and one fallow. The wheat yield is slightly higher than the average for Syria, and amounts to 833 kilogrammes per hectare (6¼ hundredweight per acre); barley yields are also slightly higher, being 8 hundredweight to the acre.

As a result of the more equal distribution of land, rather better yields, and more irrigation, the standard of living is better than in Misherfe. The first two classes, including half the families, can reach an adequate standard of consumption of food and other essentials, which is reckoned to be 25 kilogrammes of wheat per month, 1 kilogramme of meat per month (i.e. one sheep a year), 40 kilogrammes of olive oil and 20 kilogrammes of 'samn' per year, 4 tins of kerosene and a small quantity of clothing. The remainder of the village, about one-half of the total, that is the poor peasants, labourers, and share-tenants, are unable to reach this standard and live in great poverty, in one-roomed huts. The majority of these cultivators are heavily indebted, and the burden of indebtedness has doubled during the war years, because debts are usually incurred in gold.

The third study relates to Kfer Sa'ab in the north Lebanon, a hill village of small owner-cultivators. Of the total area of 200 hectares, about 30 are owned by the sheikh of the village. The total number of families is 150 (1,200 people), of which 120 own land and 30 are landless. A few peasant owners are rich with 5 hectares of land; 60 are medium owners with 1·5 to 2·5 hectares of land, and 25 own 0·5 to 1·5. Here cultivation is much more intensive than in Syria, and half the land is irrigated.

[Ashrafie, near Damascus -- Analyst]

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
Syria MDI

COTTON IN SYRIA

United States mission estimated that 50 per cent of the land was in fallow during 1948.[31] Increased irrigation and high prices for agricultural commodities have reduced significantly the fallow in the past few years, and the percentage may be less now.

PRODUCTION

Syria is normally self-sufficient in most foods. In fact, the country exports fresh and dried fruits, lentils and other legumes, tobacco, wool, butter, hides, and meat. Occasional poor harvests make it necessary to import food grains.

The greatest deficiency is in rice, which has been displaced by cotton in recent years to such an extent that almost all of the country's requirements must be imported. Last year's bad cotton crop may prompt farmers to revert to rice and, if so, this will reduce the deficiency.

Government figures indicate that production of food has not kept pace with the expansion in population and that the per capita food supply and individual calorie intake are both declining.[32] These conclusions are based on highly conjectural statistics and are in conflict with opinions of the United States Agricultural Attache and Syrian officials who are intimately acquainted with the country's agricultural problems. These observers believe there has been no real decline in food consumption, except possibly for short periods of time. Certainly there is no shortage now, and the bumper cereal crop in 1952 should enable the country to fill domestic needs and export at least 30 per cent of its wheat and possibly 50 per cent of its barley.

The daily diet consists largely of starches, it is true, but this is due more to habit than anything else. The resources of the country are ample to permit a much more balanced diet.

PRODUCTIVITY

Syrian agriculture often is characterized by the low productivity of the agricultural worker. It is obvious that a great many more people are used on each acre of land than is necessary. The low agricultural income is reflected in the obvious poverty of the people. Yet, comparisons with other countries, and even detailed calculations, are of questionable value due to the unreliability of the statistics.

Government reports on average yields also are open to question. Official figures show that wheat yields have dropped sharply, while cotton yields have tended upward, except for the extremely bad year in 1951-52. They also show very wide fluctuation. Experienced observers point out that the yields are especially questionable because both acreage and production figures are not reliable. On the basis of conversations with producers in various sections, it is apparent that yields are normally fairly high and that they fluctuate, depending on water availability and on insect devastation.

POTENTIALITIES

A number of missions which have studied the possibilities of agricultural development in Syria, especially in the last five or six years, all mention the

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[31] *Activities of FAO, 1950-52*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1952, p. 58.

[32] *Development of Food and Agricultural Resources in the Near East*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, November, 1951.

63:Simmons et al G-5 (1941-1951) 1954
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bul to Baghdad. A railroad also runs from Beirut to Damascus via Rayak. A second line from Damascus to Amman and Ma'an, in Jordan, forms part of the so-called "pilgrim" railway, opened in 1904-06. Air services are available from Damascus and, to a lesser extent, from Aleppo to Beirut and Baghdad, thence to Europe, Africa and the Far East.

Food and Nutrition

The nutritional standards of the people vary markedly in different regions, being highest in the vicinity of Damascus and lowest among the Alawites of Latakia province and the peasants of Hauran and Jebel ed Druz. Undernutrition is common, but generally it is more widespread in the rural villages than in the urban areas. Due to the lack of adequate storage and transportation facilities, local food shortages are frequent, particularly during poor crop years. Up to the present, there has been little organized effort to promote better nutrition among the different population groups. It is expected that such a program will be initiated by the nutrition division created within the governmental health services in 1952.

Cereals constitute the staple foods, and, with certain root vegetables, contribute 70 to 80 per cent of the caloric content of the average diet. Breads prepared from wheat flour are consumed in all parts of the country. Barley is sometimes employed, while maize and sorghum millet are used in the southeast. Rice is universally popular: it is grown in the Al Jazira region, and large amounts are also imported. Broad beans, chick-peas and lentils are basic food items in most areas. Other vegetables, including onions, potatoes, beets, tomatoes, eggplant and the leafy spinach and French lettuce, are abundant in Damascus and Al Jazira provinces, but scarce in Hauran and Jebel ed Druz. Numerous fruits are consumed in season, but the supply is scanty in the Euphrates valley and in the southern provinces. Olives and olive oil are important among most population groups. Milk is

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widely used, chiefly in the form of *leben*, a fermented milk product, cheese or butter. About 60 to 70 per cent of the milk is derived from sheep; the remainder, from cattle or goats. The Juliana breed of cattle and a special breed of "Damascus goat" are raised in most regions and are noteworthy as milk producers. Fowl and eggs are usually plentiful, but the consumption of meat is normally low, especially in the rural areas. Mutton is the principal meat, although the flesh of cattle, goats and camels is also utilized. Fish are valuable as a source of protein in the Euphrates and the Khabour river basins and along the coast; they are seldom available in other regions.

The Bedouin live chiefly on milk products made from the milk of their flocks, augmented by cereals and, occasionally, dates. Meat is often more of a luxury among the nomads than among the villagers. The average Bedouin diet is usually sparse and monotonous.

Housing

Life in rural Syria centers in the villages, which are self-contained social units. Structurally, they are compact, with the houses attached, and built in such a manner that a continuous windowless wall faces the street. Mud brick or adobe is the predominating building material, although stone is sometimes employed in the highland areas. The houses may consist of one or several rooms, which almost invariably open into a central compound. Separate shelters for storage and for the livestock may line the sides of the courtyards, but in the poorer villages the domestic animals are frequently housed with the family, at least during the winter months. The roofs are typically flat, made of rolled earth overlaid on poles and reeds or of thatch. Beehive-type houses with domed or conical roofs, however, are a characteristic feature of the treeless plains in Latakia, Aleppo and Al Jazira provinces. Dwellings built partially underground, often simulating caves, are encountered in some mountain villages in Latakia. Considerable

sumption of fly-contaminated foods and of raw vegetables grown in polluted soils provides an important means of transmission. Water-borne outbreaks are frequent in the rural villages, but they have decreased within recent years with the improvement of the drinking water supplies in the larger cities. Reports for 1949 show that 495 cases of typhoid fever were treated in government hospitals throughout the country, 295 cases in institutions in Damascus *muhafazat*. Similarly, 671 cases were recorded in 1950.

The relative prevalence of the different paratyphoid infections is uncertain. Paratyphoid A fever predominates among the cases in which the differential diagnosis has been established, although paratyphoid B infections are undoubtedly more numerous. Paratyphoid C fever has been diagnosed in Lebanon, but its presence in Syria has not been determined.

Immunization with typhoid-paratyphoid A and B vaccine is carried on by the health authorities among the contacts of known cases. Immunization is also widely practiced in the urban areas.

Dysenteries. Dysentery is prominent among the causes of illness. The available data give little indication of the proportionate prevalence of amebic and bacillary infections. Amebiasis is widespread, and associated with a high percentage of chronic carriers. Contaminated foods constitute the chief sources of infection, and the maximum incidence is noted in spring and summer, when lettuce and other green, leafy vegetables are consumed in abundance.

Recognized *Shigella dysenteriae* infections are rare, but occasional bacteriologically confirmed cases are recorded. Strains of the Flexner group are probably responsible for the majority of cases of bacillary dysentery. The differentiation of types is made only in Damascus, and, since few cases are hospitalized, the existing records have little significance.

Diarrhea and enteritis are prevalent, especially in infancy and early childhood. Local authorities state that fully 85 per cent

of the babies treated at the maternity and child health center in Damascus suffer from intestinal infections. Epidemics of diarrheal disease often coincide with the ripening of the apricot crop. The ready contamination of this thin-skinned fruit by flies and other insects accounts for the local designation of the early summer diarrheas in the fruit-growing districts as *mish mish* (apricot) disease.

Cholera. Serious outbreaks have accompanied the introduction of cholera in the past, but the disease was absent from Syria from 1928 to 1947, shortly after the epidemic in Egypt. On December 19, 1947, cholera was reported from 2 adjacent villages in the province of Hauran, on the road from Palestine to Damascus. At the same time, cases occurred in 3 villages in the irrigated plain of the Al Ghouta, within 3 or 4 miles of Damascus. Although 45 cases, with 18 deaths, were reported officially, it was generally believed that the actual incidence totaled at least 77 cases.

Quarantine measures were promptly imposed in Hauran and Damascus provinces, and all persons entering or leaving those regions were required to possess certificates of immunization against cholera. Over one and one half million individuals were inoculated with cholera vaccine in the vicinity of Damascus, as well as in the affected districts of Hauran and in the city of Aleppo. Supplies and assistance were furnished the Ministry of Health by the World Health Organization, the Near East Foundation and the Egyptian and Lebanese governments. Vaccine was also provided jointly by the Arabian American Oil Company and Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company. No cases were reported after the initial outbreaks, and on January 17, 1948, Syria was declared free from the disease. The exact origin of the epidemic was never definitely established.

Helminthiases. ANCYLOSTOMIASIS. Hookworm infection, caused by *Ancylostoma duodenale*, is prevalent among the agricultural workers in foci along the banks of the

versal among the 15 camels slaughtered in the same period, but the consumption of camel's meat is normally restricted to small groups of the population. 232 164

Rare cases of trichinosis are reported among the Christian peoples. Canine infections with the fluke, *Heterophyes heterophyes*, are numerous, and one instance of infection in man has been recorded. 164

Brucellosis. Brucellosis is enzootic among the goats and the cattle. Sporadic cases of undulant fever, caused by *Brucella melitensis*, occur in man. However, infection with *Br. abortus* has not been reported. According to local custom, milk is seldom used without boiling, but infection may result from the consumption of contaminated cheese or butter, as well as from contact with infected animals. 232 164 262 252 164

Diseases Spread Chiefly Through the Respiratory Tract

Tuberculosis. The reporting of tuberculosis is not compulsory in Syria, and the prevalence of the disease is not accurately known. On the basis of mortality statistics for 1947 and 1949, about 1.8 to 2.0 per cent of the total recorded deaths were due to tuberculosis. The usual discrepancies in reporting are exaggerated, however, by the tendency to conceal the presence of tuberculosis because of the social stigma attached to the disease. From 80 to 90 per cent of the known deaths were attributed to pulmonary infection, but nonpulmonary forms of tuberculosis are common in most areas. Competent local authorities estimated that there were at least 32,000 cases of tuberculosis in the country in 1951, representing a morbidity rate of about 10 per 1,000 population. 164 165 164 183 164

In the survey carried on in Damascus in 1950, tuberculin tests were performed on 10,695 individuals between 6 and 24 years of age. The positive reaction rate rose progressively with age: 12 per cent of 563 children, 6 years of age, gave a positive reaction to tuberculin, and 46 to 51 per cent of 1,079 persons from 16 to 19 years of age. 659 751